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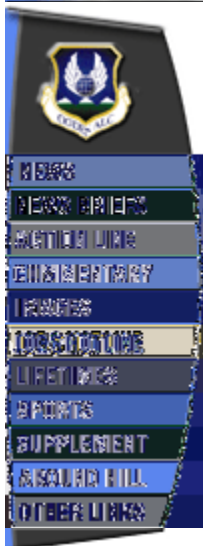


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Dyess B-1B retiring at Hill's Aerospace Museum

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With the roar of its four F-101-GE-102 engines, a massive B-1B bomber touched down for the last time on Hill's Runway 32 Monday after circling the base and completing three fly-bys.

The retiring bomber will eventually be put on display at the Hill Aerospace Museum.

The B-1B is a long-range supersonic bomber capable of providing massive and rapid delivery of precision and non-precision weapons anywhere around the globe on short notice. A plan to consolidate America's B-1 fleet will reduce the number of B-1B Lancers from 92 to 60 and will be completed by Oct. 1.

The first of two dozen B-1B Lancers to be stored at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., as part of the reduction plan, arrived there Aug. 20, 2002.

The aircraft will be stored at Davis-Monthan's Aircraft Maintenance and Regeneration Center, which stores retired Air Force aircraft for future regeneration and parts reclamation. Another eight will be placed on static display at various Air Force installations, in addition to Hill, including the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. According to Hill museum officials, the process of preparing the aircraft for display at the museum will take approximately six months.

"It's a sad feeling to see this plane go, but we know the museum here will give it a good home," said Maj. Jeff Hoyt, who was one of the two pilots and four person aircrew that brought the B-1 to Hill from Dyess AFB, Texas.

As a result of the reductions, bomber operations have already ceased at McConnell AFB, Kan.; Robins AFB, Ga.; and Mountain Home AFB, Idaho. The remaining active B-1 fleet will operate from, Ellsworth AFB, S.D. and from Dyess.

Reduction of the B-1 bomber force is part of an evolution in U.S. military policy as the military moves from a threat-based force into a capabilities-based force.



When the consolidation is complete, the Air Force will have a standardized fleet of the latest model B-1s, with the lowest number of flight hours and more spare parts from the retiring B-1s.

The money saved with a smaller fleet will be invested into defensive systems and weapons-modernization efforts.

The next major upgrade to the B-1, named Block E, will integrate the Wind Corrected Munitions Dispenser, the Joint Stand-off Weapon and the Joint Air-to-Surface Stand-off Missile systems into the B-1's arsenal. The upgrade also calls for new avionics computers.

"The B-1s we still have, have a lot of capability and a lot of life left in them. No other plane has the payload or the power of the B-1," said Maj. Doug Howard, weapon systems officer for the aircraft.

The consolidation will give the Air Force a fully funded and completely combat-capable B-1 fleet for the next 20 years

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